




State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Enclosure 7a
June 7, 2012

Deborah A. Gist
Commissioner

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TO: Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner 

SUBJECT: Approval of Certification Tests and Passing Scores

As part of its strategic plan and Race to the Top initiative, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has revised certification regulations for initial certification to include the requirement that "assessments based upon professional standards are required for all certification areas." To meet this requirement, RIDE conducted a comprehensive examination of certification tests and passing scores, certification test impact data, national and regional state certification tests and passing scores, issues of certification test portability, and the availability of prospective candidates within certification areas.

RIDE selected the recommended certification tests and passing scores through extensive and ongoing outreach with Rhode Island educators and educator preparation programs to seek feedback and guidance. A public hearing and comment period occurred between April 11 and May 11, 2012 to receive input on the recommended tests and passing scores which resulted in revisions to the recommendations contained herein.

Therefore, I RECOMMEND THAT, the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education approves the recommended certification tests and passing scores as a requirement for initial licensure for all prospective educators in Rhode Island.

Response to Issues Raised During the Board of Regents May 17, 2012 Work Session

During the Board of Regents meeting on May 17, 2012, public comment provided to the Regents raised several issues and concerns regarding three of the proposed certification tests – English as a Second Language, Technology Education, and World Languages. The issues that were raised focused on the content of the tests, the selection of the tests, and the recommended passing scores. Except for the Technology Education test, RIDE had previously received and considered these concerns in the development of the Certification Test Adoption proposal.

In response to the public comment, RIDE conducted further analysis and examination of the issues that were raised. This analysis and examination included further study of the content of alternate certification tests that were proposed in public comment, consultation with state and national experts on test content and the test selection process, and review of the proposed passing scores. Based on this additional study, RIDE maintains that the three recommended certification tests and passing scores for English as a Second Language, Technology Education, and World Languages are valid and appropriate measures for prospective Rhode Island educators. The chart below details the issues and concerns that were raised and additional information to support the appropriateness of the three certification tests and passing scores.

English as a Second Language

Issue	Concern	Additional Information
Test Content	The ETS test has an inappropriate emphasis on English Linguistics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 40% of the ETS test focuses on English Linguistics. Of this 40%, nearly half is contained in a listening section in which the candidate listens to non-native English speakers and responds to questions about their use of language.• English linguistics and language development are foundational topics for ESL teachers as this is the ‘content’ they are prepared in as all ESL teachers are already certified general education teachers.• A comparison of test content with the Massachusetts and New York ESL tests shows a similar emphasis, although in varying degree, on English linguistics and language development. Sample questions from each test assess similar knowledge and skills of English linguistics and language development as does the ETS test. Further, the examination of the New York and Massachusetts tests revealed additional concerns – the New York test was last revised in 2003 whereas the Massachusetts test emphasizes the English language proficiency of the teacher.
Passing Score	The recommended passing score of 151 is too high.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The recommended passing score of 151 generates a passing rate of 71% based on national data. This passing rate is consistent with the recommended passing rates for other certification tests.

Issue	Concern	Additional Information
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kentucky has set a passing score of 157 and Idaho like Rhode Island has set 151 as a passing score. • Four other states have set a similar passing score of 149 – Indiana, Maryland, Vermont, and Virginia. • While a small sample size, 12 Rhode Island test takers have taken the recommended test and 75% of them have achieved at least the recommended 151 passing score.
Test Selection	The ETS test is not used by states with diverse populations such as California, Massachusetts, New York and Texas, and is used only by states that have little diversity such as Alabama, Indiana, and Tennessee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most large states, including California, Massachusetts, New York, and Texas, develop their own tests, and as such, do not use any tests that are produced by ETS or any other testing companies for general use by other states. • Eighteen other states currently require the ETS test including Alabama, Indiana, Tennessee, as well as several states that have similar diversity to Rhode Island including Washington, D.C., Hawaii, Maryland, North Carolina, and Virginia. • Two other New England states, Maine and Vermont, currently require the ETS test while Connecticut, which participated with Rhode Island in the same multi-state validation study of the ETS test, will adopt the ETS test during 2012 thus further extending the portability of the ETS test.
Test Selection	Rhode Island should adopt a test from a state such as Massachusetts or New York or develop its own test.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests that are developed by a single state have no portability – they are only accepted in the state from which they originate. A priority in the selection of certification tests is that Rhode Island adopts tests that are accepted in other states for licensure thereby minimizing the number of tests educators must take and pay for. • While it may be possible to adopt another state's test, Rhode Island would have to compensate a state for the use of its tests and develop a system to administer and revise the test. This effort would require a substantial investment of both financial and human resources in pursuit of tests that show limited variance from the recommended ETS test. • Rhode Island has not previously developed a certification test. Test development is an

Issue	Concern	Additional Information
		extensive process that requires significant psychometric and assessment expertise that is not available at RIDE. Further, RIDE would need to develop structures and systems to support such a test including administration, security, revision, and materials development. Such efforts would significantly tax RIDE resources especially when there is a valid measure available.

Technology Education

Issue	Concern	Additional Information
Passing Score	The recommended passing score of 166 too high.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommended passing score of 166 would generate a passing rate of 83% based on national data. This passing rate is already higher than many other certification test passing scores that have been recommended for adoption in Rhode Island. Connecticut has set the same passing score of 166 as is recommended for adoption. Kansas (160) and Virginia (162) have set similar passing scores.

World Languages

Issue	Concern	Additional Information
Test Content	The ETS test does not have sufficient focus on oral language proficiency which is a critical skill for world language teachers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ETS test measures all four domains of language – speaking, listening, reading, and writing. While oral language proficiency is an important skill, it is also important that prospective educators are proficient in all aspects of the target language. The ETS world language test content is distributed relatively evenly across all language domains (listening 26%, reading 26%, writing 18%, and speaking 18%) while also including a component on cultural knowledge (12%). The OPI only measures speaking skills. Certification tests, as a baseline assessment, are designed to ensure that prospective educators are proficient in the full depth and breadth of their certification area, not just one specific aspect.
Test Selection	The ETS test only has versions for several languages. RIDE is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ETS tests are currently available in four languages – French, German, Latin, and

Issue	Concern	Additional Information
	<p>recommending the OPI test for languages not addressed by ETS tests. Therefore the OPI test should be a sufficient test for all languages.</p>	<p>Spanish. ETS has also added a test in Mandarin for the 2012 year – included in the validation process for this test were two educators from Rhode Island.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RIDE issues very few world language certificates beyond those world languages addressed by ETS tests – only 59 educators in 12 districts who have certificates in Italian (41), Japanese (1), and Portuguese (16). Further, RIDE issues very few new certificates in these areas – less than five certificates were issued during 2011-2012. • The ETS tests have significantly more portability than the OPI – the ETS tests are accepted for certification in 30 states whereas the OPI is accepted in only 12 states. • Absent an ETS test for a specific world language, RIDE has recommended the OPI to ensure proficiency in at least one skill area for prospective world language teachers.
Test Selection	<p>If RIDE adopts the ETS test, it also should require the OPI test for certification.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification regulations require RIDE to adopt assessments for all certification areas that are based on professional standards – the ETS tests are based on professional standards. Requiring world language teachers to take more than one content area certification test would be inconsistent with all other certificate areas which have been required to only take one content test. • RIDE recognizes the validity of the OPI as a measure of oral language proficiency and encourages programs to continue to use this assessment if they select to in support of their candidates’ development of oral language skills in the target language.

Rhode Island Certification Tests and Passing Scores

The following certification tests and passing scores are required for initial licensure in the state of Rhode Island as of September 1, 2013.

Certification Area	Certification Test	Passing Score
Early Childhood Education		
Early Childhood Education	Education of Young Children (0021)	174
	Early Childhood Content Knowledge (0022)	170
Early Childhood Bilingual and Dual Language Education	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151
Early Childhood English as a Second Language Education	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151
Early Childhood Special Education	Special Education: Preschool/Early Childhood (0691)	159
Elementary Education		
Elementary Education	Principles of Learning and Teaching Test, K-6 (0622)	160
	Elementary Content Knowledge (5031)	
	Reading and Language Arts Subtest (5032)	165
	Mathematics Subtest (5033)	164
	Social Science Subtest (5034)	155
	Science Subtest (5035)	159
Elementary Bilingual and Dual Language Education	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151
Elementary English as a Second Language Education	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151
Elementary Special Education	Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications (0543)	164
Middle Grades Education		
Middle Grades Education – Stand Alone, All Content Areas	Principles of Learning and Teaching Test, 5-9 (0623)	160
Middle Grades English – Elementary Extension and Stand Alone	Middle School English Language Arts (0049)	165
Middle Grades Mathematics – Elementary Extension and Stand Alone	Middle School Mathematics (0069)	158
Middle Grades Science – Elementary Extension and Stand Alone	Middle School Science (0439)	154
Middle Grades Social Studies – Elementary Extension and Stand Alone	Middle School Social Studies (0089)	160
Middle Grades World Languages – Elementary Extension and Stand Alone	French World Language (5174)	162
	German World Language (5183)	163
	Latin (0600)	690
	Spanish World Language (5195)	168
	All other world languages – OPI	Advanced Low
Middle Grades Bilingual and Dual Language Education	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151
Middle Grades English as a Second Language	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151

Certification Area	Certification Test	Passing Score
Education		
Middle Grades Special Education	Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications (0543)	164
Secondary Education		
Secondary Grades – All Content Areas	Principles of Learning and Teaching Test, 7-12 (0624)	157
Secondary Grades Agriculture	Agriculture (0700)	520
Secondary Grades Biology	Biology: Content Knowledge (0235)	157
Secondary Grades Business Education	Business Education: Content Knowledge (0101)	167
Secondary Career and Technical Education	Appropriate NOCTI test and passing score	
Secondary Grades Chemistry	Chemistry: Content Knowledge (0245)	156
Secondary Grades English	English Language: Literature, Literature, and Composition (0044)	166
Secondary Grades General Science	General Science: Content Knowledge (0435)	153
Secondary Grades Mathematics	Mathematics: Content Knowledge (0061)	142
Secondary Grades Physics	Physics: Content Knowledge (0265)	146
Secondary Grades Social Studies	Social Studies: Content Knowledge (0081)	162
Secondary Grades World Language		
	French World Language (5174)	162
	German World Language (5183)	163
	Latin (0600)	690
	Spanish World Language (5195)	168
	All other world languages – OPI	Advanced Low
Secondary Grades Bilingual and Dual Language Education	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151
Secondary Grades English as a Second Language Education	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151
Secondary Grades Special Education	Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications (0543)	164
All Grades Education		
All Grades Education – All content areas	Principles of Learning and Teaching Test, K-6 (0622)	160
	OR Principles of Learning and Teaching Test, 7-12 (0624)	157
All Grades Art	Art: Content Knowledge (0134)	158
All Grades Family and Consumer Science	Family and Consumer Sciences (0121)	162
All Grades Health	Health Education (0550)	670
All Grades Library Media	Library Media Specialist (0311)	162
All Grades Music	Music: Content Knowledge (0113)	160
All Grades Physical Education	Physical Education: Content Knowledge (0091)	154
All Grades Technology Education	Technology Education (0051)	166
All Grades Theatre	Theatre (0640)	610
Special Education - Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students (0272)	160
Special Education - Visually Impaired	Special Education Teaching Students with	163

Certification Area	Certification Test	Passing Score
	Visual Impairments (0282)	
Special Education -Severe Intellectual Disability	Special Education: Core Knowledge and Severe to Profound Applications (0545)	164
All Grades Bilingual and Dual Language Education	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151
All Grades English as a Second Language Education	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151
Elementary/Middle Special Education	Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications (0543)	164
Middle/Secondary Special Education	Special Education: Core Knowledge and Mild to Moderate Applications (0543)	164
Administrators		
Building Level Administrator	School Leaders Licensure Assessment (1011)	166
Superintendent of Schools	School Superintendent Assessment (1020)	165
Support Professionals		
English as a Second Language Specialist	Principles of Learning and Teaching Test, K-6 (0622)	157
	OR Principles of Learning and Teaching Test, 7-12 (0624)	160
	English to Speakers of Other Languages (0361)	151
Reading Specialist	Reading Specialist (5301)	164
School Counselor	School Guidance and Counseling (0420)	610
School Psychologist	School Psychologist (0401)	165
Speech and Language Pathologist	Speech and Language Pathologist (0330)	600
English Language Proficiency		
All certificate areas when the prospective educator was prepared for certification at an institution where English was not the language of instruction.	Versant Pro Speaking and Writing English	164